



OPTIMIST CLUB OF DES PLAINES, IL

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TREES, TREES, TREES!



Once again the mysterious process has occurred that has transformed a parking lot into a very special area of Yuletide spirit and Optimism. Of course, we are speaking of the Optimist Tree Lot, once again at its familiar location of Perry and River Roads, where it has been located for the past several years. This will surely be the last year that we will be in this location with all of the plans for the renovation of the downtown area finally beginning to take place.

For the newer members of our club, it may be good to give a shortened version of how the lot takes form each year. It begins with one of our members, Mike Schimka towing the trailer over to the lot. There is quite a bit of work to do, then, to ready the trailer for the coming weeks of tree sales. It needs to be leveled, hooked up to electricity and phone line, the steps into the trailer re-constructed, and, of course, cleaned out. We have had a good turnout of members for each of the tree weekends that are necessary for the tree lot to spring into being.

The following weekend begins with faithful Paul Just, who has been helping us for the past 25 years or so to transport the lumber for the racks from Public Works. This wood has lain there, amongst the weeds and exposed to the elements for a year. Tom Swanson and Paul Magnusson were on hand to drag

the wood out of the weeds and load it on to Paul Just's truck. He then delivers it to the lot where it is dumped, thank goodness, so that lots of willing hands and hammers can begin to transform this wet, and seasoned wood, into the racks that will display our trees for the public. Thanks to all of you who

showed up to help, and especially, to remember how and where everything needed to be placed. It was so good to see some of our newest members, Mandy Valenza and Andy Piscitello there to help.

The last weekend our trees arrive and thanks to members and scouts and our new JOOI club we are able to unload and set up so that we can finally begin to sell

the trees that allow us to fund all of our activities and organizations that we help throughout the year.



Phil Fatigato, Ray Kopecky's grandson, is always there to help.

As with all of our programs, there can be no success with good leadership. In particular, we need to thank Steve Kozak, who has, once again, chaired this important committee. We are also grateful to the leadership of Jim Woods, Lenny Lang and Norm Voss, and Ed Welther.

There is only one other thing we need to do, and this to sell trees. If you have some free time on your hands, come over to the lot, to help, or keep company. There are still times (1-5 PM,

especially) where we need help. The lot number is: (847) 297-7835. Sell Trees!!

November Meetings

Our first meeting of the month found our members enjoying a presentation made by Deb Walusiak of the Self-Help Closet & Pantry of Des Plaines, as well as welcoming two new members into our fold of Optimism.

The Self-Help Closet & Pantry of Des Plaines has been in existence for more than 30 years, providing food, clothing, and small household items to needy residents in our community. It was first begun in 1971 as a volunteer program of the Woman's Fellowship of the First Congregational Church. In 1986 the growing demand to assist clients had reached its limit, outgrowing the three small basement rooms and hallway that had served as its base of operations.

Looking for more space and combined with their incorporation as an independent not-for-profit organization in the state of Illinois, the city of Des Plaines allowed them to use space in the basement of West School which was no longer in use. When the school was purchased and became the Willows Academy, they were briefly housed by the Salvation Army Church on Dempster. In 2001 they moved into their present location at Wolf and Algonquin, a building owned by the city, the purchase of which was made possible by the efforts of Rosemary Mulligan and Dave Sullivan.

There are a variety of ways that organizations and individuals can help this worthy cause that go beyond donating food items to the many red barrels that we see throughout our community. If you are interested in some of these, please call Deb Walusiak at (847) 337-1443.

Andy Piscitello, a graduate of Maine West and Eureka College has joined the club as our second college student. Andy will be enrolled as a full time student at National Lewis University in Evanston where he will pursue a teaching career. He has already helped with the rack set-up and has signed up for several times at the lot.

Peggy Higgins is the manager of the new Des Plaines National Bank that is housed in the former First National Bank building on Lee Street. She is a transfer member from the Glenview Club, feeling that it made more sense for her to be active in her "new community."

We hope that all of you will introduce yourselves to these new members when you have the opportunity and get to know them. They are good folk!

December

Birthdays



Only two of our members were born in December and they are:

Mike Berkowitz
and
Dave Ehlert

We wish them both the very best of wishes and hope that we haven't missed anyone.

No one has come forward to tell us if their anniversary is in December, so we guess none were married then.



The Trees are here!

Are **YOU** signed



up to work?



New Member, Peggy Higgins



Our Second College Student, Andy Piscitello

(meetings, cont.)

It was also good to see our friend, Lenny Lang, and Jim Woods whose new pooch has graduated from Thursday night dog training school.

Our November 20th meeting was well attended and will be our last at the Elk's Club until we return there in January. (Please note, we will meet on Jan. 8 and 22 since the first Thursday in January is New Years Day.) We were once again treated by Mr. Fun and Mr. Frolics, Ed and Ray, to what has become our annual "Turkey Poke." Ed finally was awarded his jester hat and he had Ray make quite a couple. There were lots of prizes ranging from money, to condiments, to turkeys. Big winners were Swanny, Ralph Cote, Tom Swanson, and Norm Voss, all sitting at the same table! Hmm....

Our next meeting will be at the tree lot on Dec. 4 and the food, fun and fellowship will not be diminished, but enhanced by the surroundings. Come one, come all and see you then!

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Of most serious concern to all of us is the health of Meghan Atherton and her loving husband, Bill. All we can report is that she is better and can "get around a little" when she is not having chemo. When she is having it, it is not good. We want her and Bill to know that we miss them so, and hope that it helps for them to know that they are, in fact, in our thoughts and prayers.

As for Lenny Lang, well, it is hard for this writer to know that he has gone through all that he has. It was so good to see him at a meeting and even better to see him at the lot again. He may not be as flexible, but he was there doing so much to get us up and running. Now that the lot is open he is there making wreaths as usual.

Del Johnson is at home and is still recovering. Last word that we had on him was that all was well, mostly due to his dear wife Laverne. She really is a dear, since we all know Del so very well. Just kidding!



Lenny admires the first wreath of the season.

It's all about the JOOI

We hope to keep our members up to date on what our JOOI club at Algonquin is doing each month. You've already heard about their enthusiasm and how they have already begun to help at the Tree Lot. Their faculty sponsor is Pedro Soriano. In recent election they following were chosen to lead this charter group: President, Melissa Szanati; Vice Presidents; Elyssa Salinas and Steve Jacobsen; Treasurer, Steve Shaw; and Secretary Jessica Tarcak. There are presently 33 members in the club and there are expectations of more joining.



It's all about the Joy of our JOOI Club.

Friend of Youth



Coming Events

- December 4 **Meeting** at the Tree Lot, 7PM
- December 18 **Meeting** at the Tree Lot, 7 PM
Please note: there will be a
Board Meeting immediately
before in the Wreath Room.
- December 27 **Tree Lot Cleanup** (take down
rack, lights, etc.) 9-?



More JOOI at the Lot.

The Prez Sez



Through the Eyes of a Child

It's tree lot season again and I am pretty sure that we all like working at the lot. But if it's cold,

windy, rainy or snowy I would imagine that we might have some feeling of regret for signing up for that particular night.

I have had the unique opportunity to see the tree lot through the eyes of children this season with our JOOI club members. The kids came tentatively, not knowing what magic was going to happen during their 2 hours of volunteer 'community service'. Their transformation started as we walked the lot assessing what we needed to do. Their eyes and smiles got bigger as they saw all the trees and listened to the holiday music, reminding me why we sell these trees.

What had begun as 'work' became fun as they swept the lot and collected trash from around the area. They insisted they weren't cold as I watched from the trailer! They asked a lot of questions about our club and recalled several of our activities they have attended in years past as we warmed up with cookies and cocoa.

When their time ended, many didn't want to leave the magic of the lot. Parents came and bought trees and even brought food for the kids and us. We even have a potential new member who is interested in joining, all because his daughter had fun helping the Optimists.

I had so much fun working with the kids in the afternoon that I stayed until closing. You know, I can't wait until Wednesday when I can work again!